



Planning Department
Community Development Department, Town of Los Gatos
110 E. Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95030

January 18, 2021

**Re: The Bouknight Residence, 145* Wood Road
Project Description/ Letter of Justification**

To Whom it May Concern:

On behalf of Omari and Kavita Bouknight and their young family, I am pleased to present this project for an Architecture and Site application. The proposed project includes the construction of a new three-story home with an attached two car garage. This letter, accompanies the building plans and additional exhibits, contains descriptions of the property, the neighborhood, and how the proposed development complies with the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines.

EXISTING PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

Access

The property is located approximately at the end of the public portion of Wood Road. As an official address number has yet to be assigned, a new address application proposing 145 Wood Road for the subject property will be submitted. The 29,632 sq. ft. (0.68 Acre) vacant property is currently accessed from a shared access road (also called Wood Road) that serves five other properties uphill including 138 Wood Road, which borders the eastern and southern sides of the subject property. A lot line adjustment was proposed in 2016 and an easement was established at 138 Wood Road to provide ingress/egress and utilities access to the subject property. Part of this scope is to expand this easement to the lower apron area where it will become the primary access to the site.

Topography

The site has a north-east facing slope that averages at 35%. A least restrictive development area (LRDA) was outlined on areas that are under 30% slope for the proposed building area. The building pad is in a natural clearing that is void of trees. Several mature oak trees cover the northern portion of the property, with several more oaks located in the lower apron area. The southern portion (along the "front" property line facing Wood Road) has a relatively steep exposed cut bank that was created when the access road was created. Lastly, an old graded dirt path that branches off the shared access road also runs along the lower apron area and along the northern border. Apart from being visible to the adjacent Draa Residence at 138 Wood Road, the property is relatively private and isolated.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED RESIDENCE

Early Development and challenges:

Using the initial driveway concept (developed during the lot line adjustment) where the driveway will enter from the high side of the property, a two story home was planned. Parking, truck turnaround area, garage and the main living spaces were all planned on the upper floor at elevation 744' and the remaining bedrooms were planned on the lower floor with a small basement. Where so much of the flat area was used by parking and the truck turnaround, the house was pushed forward and was considerably taller, bulkier and not integrated into the hillside landscape. The construction of the hair pin shaped driveway would also require a large amount of grading and tall retaining walls. Overall we decided that it was not the best integration between the house and the property.

Final design and solutions:

A very limited LRDA and a strict hillside height plane have led us to the current proposed design: to enter the property from the lower apron area, to split the footprint of the house into 3 stories and to better incorporate the building mass to the slope of the hill. The new driveway is more user-friendly as it follows the contours of the lot and around the existing trees. It also reduces the amount of grading significantly and only requires a minimal amount of retaining walls to support the turnaround area, as well as to preserve the nearby existing trees. The turnaround area at the lower end of the house also allows for a more conventional configuration: with a garage and entry on the lower level, the main living areas and master suite on the middle (second) level and the remainder of the bedrooms on the upper (third) level.

In addition to terracing the home as to reduce the overall massing from all angles of view, a sizable amount of the lower (84%) and main floor (37%) areas are located below grade in order to reduce visible bulk and mass. As a result, the proposed floor area is 3,246sf, less than the maximum allowed floor area of 3,900sf (calculated using an adjusted net lot of 11,852 sf). Some preliminary studies of the project site from the viewing platform lead us to believe that less than 25% of the home should be visible. However, we have selected to work with a more restrictive 18 foot height plane (rather than the 25 foot height plane) in case the visibility percentage will pose further limitations. Technically speaking the building has a combined total height of 34 ft 6 inches, but with the upper floor so far setback from the two lower floors one can hardly see all 3 stories at the same time (more discussion on visibility below).

Connectivity and outdoor spaces

Circulation and outdoor spaces are high priorities of the owners, but they are also difficult to achieve on a 3 story home on a hillside lot. A large covered porch that wraps around the lower floor provides shelter and exterior definition. It also supports the main level exterior entertaining spaces (loggia, trellis, side balcony) as the hillside doesn't allow for conventional, widespread yards. A series of access stairs are also incorporated on the south and north-west side of the house to allow for egress, air and light, or simply to walk around the house. A modest yard/patio space is planned at the upper level outside the upper family room with a small lap pool on the private side of the property. The house itself has 5 bedrooms and 6 baths. The 3 levels are connected on the inside via a grand stairway as well as an elevator. There are doors on each level that lead to the outdoor spaces.

Architectural Style:

The exterior of the home is done in a contemporary Mediterranean style, with classic details such as hipped roof, arch openings and subtleties including shaped rafter tails and cast stone trim.

Covered loggia, trellis and railing are constructed in stained wood and painted metal to lighten up the stucco monochromatic appearance and to create overall hierarchy and interest. The roof will have a charcoal tone barrel tile cover. The exterior walls are predominately dark tone stucco siding and accompanied by natural limestone veneer in areas such as the entry. Black or dark bronze doors and windows will match with the painted black iron railing and gutter details. Lastly, cast stone trim will be used to accent the arch openings and parapet walls.

Neighbor Outreach:

We have been in close contact with the owners of 138 Wood Road (The Draa Family) about the proposed development, particularly about the driveway approach via their property. They have shown great support to this version of the driveway design and appreciate our effort of preserving the existing oak trees and keeping the proposed building at a lower height.

VISIBILITY

From our preliminary studies the subject property can only be seen from only one of the regular viewing platforms: at the intersection of Hwy 9 and Hwy 17 overpass. Several mature and dense live oak (evergreen) trees surround the proposed house pad and provide excellent screening for a good percentage of the house. The exact degree of visibility is still to be determined when story poles can be set. Acknowledging the possibility that the visible amount might exceed 25%, the home has been designed to follow the 18 foot height limit, even if it is determined that the house could break it.

SITE ACCESS AND FENCE

As mentioned earlier, a 14' wide driveway is proposed thru the lower apron area downhill from the property. An odd shaped appendage of the neighboring property will allow a more drivable access route with minimal grading cut and fill. A few retaining walls were planned 1) at the corner of the fire truck turnaround area and 2) around the existing oak grove for protection. Backfill is planned on the downhill side of the retaining walls to conceal/reduce the wall visibility. Lastly, in order to allow for a smooth 5% slope transition from Wood Road as well as to the truck turnaround area, a middle section of the driveway is proposed to have a 20% slope with a proposed fire department exception. By comparison, the existing Wood Road is about 25% in slope so we believe the proposal is reasonable.

A 6 foot high pool safety fence is proposed at the back and side yard of the property. It would be an open iron fence with matte black paint finish.

LANDSCAPING AND SITE WORK

Preliminary Grading and Drainage plans were prepared by the civil engineering firm Hanna Brunetti. Earthwork quantities are relatively low for a hillside project, with 1401 cubic yards of cut and fill are required for the driveway and landscape areas.

A conceptual landscape plan is included with the submittal package. Luckily with the building pad naturally void of trees and being able to work around the existing trees for the driveway, no tree is proposed to be removed. A few decorative new trees are planned to provide privacy screening. The site plan also shows the locations of all the walkways, courtyard, balcony and patios. Again, the goal is to provide circulation, egress, air and light as best we can. A retaining wall is proposed at the back patio to create a modest yard space (see below for grading exception). The finish wall will be about 4.5' tall with 2:1 grading behind it to conform to the existing grade. The retaining walls will either have matching stucco finish, or stone veneer in some areas. Along the southern side of the

property, there is a relatively steep road cut between the subject property and 138 Wood Road. From consulting with our geotechnical engineer we understand some stabilization work will likely be required, part of it will include cutting down roughly 3' at the top of the cut bank in order to reduce the soil's load impact to the new development. The goal would be to achieve the stabilization through the use of natural materials.

EXCEPTIONS (REFER TO THE GRADING EXCEPTION PLAN ON A1.2)

We formally request the following exceptions for the proposed project:

Fill exception at the northern corner of the turnaround area: a fill exception is proposed to accommodate the best placement of the firetruck turnaround space. The retaining wall will be 7ft high, holding back about 6 ft of fill. The retaining wall will be entirely hidden by the oak grove and not be visible to any neighbors.

Cut exception at the residence entry at the lower floor: a maximum of 7'-6" of cut is proposed at the lower floor entry area, most of this area will become the entry covered porch and driveway to the garage.

Cut exception at the back yard at the upper floor: being this is the only yard space and the only area that connects the house to the pool, a retaining wall is proposed at the western side of the patio. The maximum cut is about 6'-9" and will be supported by a 4.5' high retaining wall and a 2:1 grading above it to conform to the existing grade.

COMPLIANCE WITH HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

In addition to what was identified above, the proposed home specifically addresses the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines as follows:

Site Planning:

- The new home has been sited to maintain privacy of neighboring properties (II.C.G2)
- The siting of the house in relation to Wood Road reduces the driveway length and grading impacts
- All of the perimeter trees have been preserved;
- Design to be neighbor friendly: offsetting the driveway approach from the neighbor's and keeping the house back and at a lower height plane.

Harmony and Compatibility:

- Given the hillside setting, with minimal neighbors for architectural context, the property allows for some freedom in exterior styling. The contemporary Mediterranean style responds very well to the design intent of the HDG&S in that it blends with this natural setting.

Scale and Mass:

- The multi-story home steps down the slope and the massing is tucked into the hillside. Majority of the structure is under 18 feet.
- The house has been designed with simple forms and hipped rooflines, as well as varying wall planes that break up each elevation into smaller units.

Exterior Materials:

- Materials are natural to blend with the environment
- All meet stringent WUI classified fire resistant materials.

- All exterior surfaces to meet the 30 LRV weighted average requirement.

Energy Conservation:

- The house will employ high quality dual glazed, low E wood windows, ultra-high performance insulation packages and high efficiency mechanical systems for heating, cooling and domestic hot water.
- Covered porches will shade the major doors from the sun.
- The house is oriented to take full advantage of cross ventilation practices.
- Substantial amount of roof areas provide plenty of space for solar collectors
- The home will comply with the new 2019 REACH Codes

Privacy:

- With the proposed residence set into the hill, the majority of the windows are directed downhill and away from the nearby neighbors.
- The proposed driveway is relocated downhill of the residence to allow for an offset driveway approach from the neighbor's.
- The outdoor gathering areas such as loggia and future pool are located on the private side of the residence, away from the public road and the adjacent neighbors.

Landscaping:

- All proposed landscaping shall comply with the Town's Landscaping Policies including the HDS&G section.
- Proposed drought tolerant plants and landscape materials have been chosen to enhance both the architecture and the natural setting of the lot.
- While no trees will be removed under this permit, several trees have been added to the site. Many of these will provide privacy screening between neighbors.

Geological:

- A geological and geotechnical consultation has been contracted to review the proposed development and to ensure that no significant geological hazards that exist to prevent a safe and secure structure to be constructed.

CONCLUSION

This house has been conceived from the beginning to be compatible with the hillside setting. The size, mass, color and exterior style are in keeping with the intent of the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines and this home fits in with the immediate neighborhood. And most importantly we believe this is the best application to achieve the owners' goals, while making the best use of the property and respecting all the Hillside Development Standards and Guidelines. We appreciate your time to review our application and hope to get your support and approval.

Sincerely,



Gary Kohlsaatt
Architect C19245